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A Commentary

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**Stefan Berger**

## **Crusading Histories and European National Narratives – A Commentary**

### **Abstract**

This article has its origins in a commentary delivered by the author on draft versions of the articles by Ines Guhe and Matthias Schwerendt included in this web publication. It seeks to contextualize crusading histories in the wider history of national historiographies and comments on the place of the crusades within European memory culture. Histories of the crusades are furthermore seen as exemplifying the strong interrelationship between national and religious master narratives. Furthermore, the article briefly alludes to the impact of Romanticism and Imperialism on crusading narratives and underlines the importance of future research into the ways in which those narratives have been gendered. The article concludes by arguing that there is no neat delineation between history and myths - in crusading histories as elsewhere in historical writing.

### **Introduction**

The foundation of the Belgian nation state in 1831 led to a massive outburst on national history, in which the crusades played a prominent part. Belgian national historians routinely claimed that no land had given the crusades more soldiers than Belgium. In the festivities celebrating 25 years of the Belgian nation state in Brussels in 1856, the crusades were prominently present in floats in a historical parade. The focus of attention in those Belgian crusading narratives was Baldwin IX of Flanders who had occupied Constantinople during the fourth crusade. In a supporting role we also find Peter the Hermit, born in the Belgian town of Huy, who played a certain, albeit ambiguous role in instigating the first crusade (1096 – 99). He had led troops famous for their lack of discipline and was ultimately defeated by 'the Turks'.

To make matters worse, his subsequent attempt to flee captivity failed. By contrast, Godfrey of Bouillon, was indeed a knight in shining armour. The duke of Lower Lotharingia was portrayed as a 'Christian Hercules', and it was no coincidence that an equestrian statue of Godfrey was unveiled at the Place Royale in Brussels in the presence of king and queen. It stood very near the park where Dutch troops had been defeated during the revolution of 1830. Godfrey was indeed celebrated as 'first king of the Belgians'. Naturally, he was also among the portraits of fifteen patriotic heroes installed in the senate chamber of the Belgian parliament in 1865, and he was portrayed again in two knightly portraits that were chosen to decorate the Royal Palace. In the nineteenth century, Godfrey was invariably seen as incarnation of the virtues of the Belgian national 'race'. The hero-worshipping of Godfrey in Belgium fit into a greater desire to portray a patriotic Middle Ages and link such patriotism with the virtue of

a truly Christian, Catholic community. Godfrey, in other words, became the pioneer in the history of Christian civilisation, as seen through Belgian national eyes. When the liberal national master narrative began to clash rather badly with the Catholic one from the 1870s onwards, the liberal historians were more prone to celebrate the 'ancient Belgian liberties' and forget about Godfrey, but in the Catholic national master narrative he retained an absolutely central place.<sup>1</sup>

To a certain extent, the Belgian story repeats itself in the case of Luxembourg, where the crusades also played a very important role for the national historical master narrative.<sup>2</sup> John, king of Bohemia and count of Luxembourg, buried in Luxembourg, was, after all, a prominent participant in the northern crusade. As national hero he was immortalized in Romantic poetry, songs, paintings, novels and histories. In fact, liberal and Catholic historiography united in the celebration of the crusades as an important part of Luxembourg national history. And the stories of Belgium and Luxembourg could be multiplied across various European nation states.

The crusades are therefore a good example of medievalisms in modern Europe or of *The Uses of the Middle Ages in Modern European States* as the title of a recent volume in the *Writing the Nation* book series put it.<sup>3</sup> The series is based on a European Science Foundation-funded research programme entitled 'Representations of the Past: the Writing of National Histories in 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Europe' (NHIST), which I had the pleasure to chair between 2003 and 2008.<sup>4</sup> Amongst other things, the programme confirmed the prominent role of the Middle Ages in national historical master narratives, something that had already been powerfully underlined by Monika Flacke's exhibition 'Myths of the Nations' held at the German Historical Museum in Berlin the late 1990s.<sup>5</sup> My commentary follows a thematic structure. First, it will reflect on European memory culture and the place of the crusades within it with a view to problematising whether it is more appropriate to talk about European or national memory cultures with regard to the crusades. Secondly, I will briefly talk about the interrelationship between national and religious master narratives of which

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<sup>1</sup> Jo Tollebeek, "An Era of Grandeur. The Middle Ages in Belgian National Historiography", in: *The Uses of the Middle Ages in Modern European States: History, Nationhood and the Search for Origins*, Robert J. Evans and Guy P. Marchal, eds. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 113-136. See also Laurence Boudart, "Ils lisaient la patrie. La formation de l'identité nationale à travers les manuels de lecture de l'école primaire belge (1842-1939)", (PhD diss., University of Valladolid, 2008), [http://eprints.aidenligne-francais-universite.auf.org/9/1/pdf\\_TESIS39-091216\\_repositorio\\_UVa\\_1.pdf](http://eprints.aidenligne-francais-universite.auf.org/9/1/pdf_TESIS39-091216_repositorio_UVa_1.pdf) (accessed 15 August 2011) who also discusses the important role of Godfrey in Belgian school books.

<sup>2</sup> Pit Péporté, Sonja Kmec, Benoit Majerus and Michel Margue, *Inventing Luxembourg: Representations of the Past, Space and Language from the Nineteenth to the Twenty-First Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

<sup>3</sup> Evans and Marchal, *The Uses of the Middle Ages in Modern European States*. See also Natalie Fryde, Pierre Monnet, Otto Gerhard Oexle and Leszek Zygmier (eds), *Die Deutung der mittelalterlichen Gesellschaft in der Moderne* (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> For details on the programme including its many publications, see [http://www.uni-leipzig.de/zhsesf/index.php?option=com\\_frontpage&Itemid=1](http://www.uni-leipzig.de/zhsesf/index.php?option=com_frontpage&Itemid=1) (accessed 17 August 2011).

<sup>5</sup> Monika Flacke (ed.), *Mythen der Nationen: ein europäisches Panorama* (Munich: Koehler & Amelang, 1998).

the history of the crusades is obviously part and parcel. Thirdly, I will investigate to what extent crusading narratives have been inflected by Romantic forms of history writing. Then I shall comment briefly on the gendering of the crusades as part and parcel of the gendering of national historical master narratives. I would subsequently like to discuss the role of crusading narratives in imperial European discourses. And finally, I will contextualise crusading narratives within a wider European history politics that has often worked by conflating history, memory and myths.

### **The Place of the Crusades in European Memory Culture**

As I have argued elsewhere, there have been various attempts to construct a European memory culture around five distinct master narratives.<sup>6</sup> The first one has to do with ancient Greece and Rome as the intellectual birthplaces of Europe. The second one, of which the crusades are an essential part, is the idea of a medieval Christian Europe. The third one circles around the notion of European humanism and the fourth memory culture is that usually described as the European Enlightenment(s). The last one is less idealistic and beautiful, although arguably the most powerful one today, namely the history of the World Wars, of genocide and ethnic cleansing marking the first half of the twentieth century. None of these European memory cultures is without their problems, and arguably none of them really work as all-European memory cultures. Furthermore, they tend to be nationally inflected, and future research on the reception of the crusades as one of the central narratives of the notion of a Christian Europe will have to shed more light on the question to what extent this has been the case with the crusades and in what way it has led to a variety of different crusading histories. There can be no doubt that crusading histories have provided many Christian heroes and crystallized Christian virtues and understanding of morality, but equally that many heroic and virtuous narratives have been thoroughly nationalized.

We have already seen above, with the cases of Luxembourg and Belgium, how Christian heroes were nationalized in the nineteenth century. National master narratives in countries as diverse as Spain, Poland, Russia and Hungary contained ideas about national missions protecting Christian Europe from the infidels and being Christian Europe's shield and protection. National and European histories were thus entangled and interrelated, but the European was invariably read through the national lenses. National master narratives, in other words, subordinated the European storylines (including the one about the crusades) under their overarching story. This is in line with the findings of NHIST about the extraordinary powers of national master narratives to subsume other spatial (and, incidentally, non-spatial) master narratives under their remit. Matthias Schwerendt's contribution confirms this by emphasizing how closely linked crusading histories were with histories of national greatness in Spain, Rus-

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<sup>6</sup> Stefan Berger, "History and Forms of Collective Identity in Europe: Why Europe Cannot and Should Not be Built on History", in: *The Essence and the Margin: National Identities and Collective Memories in Contemporary European Culture*, Laura Rorato and Anna Saunders, eds, (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2009), 21-36.

sia, Britain, France and Germany.<sup>7</sup>

### **Religious and National Master Narratives**

The importance of Christianity to European memory culture points to the strong interrelationship between religious and national master narratives in European historiography.<sup>8</sup> As nation became a form of secularized religion in nineteenth-century Europe, so religion became an integral part of the national discourses almost everywhere in Europe. The language of 'chosen people' that we also encounter in Matthias Schwerendt's and Ines Guhe's articles about crusading narratives, indicates the close relationship between Christian and national concepts of salvation.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, the results of the NHIST project with regard to religious and national master narratives in Europe can be summarized as follows:

1. The religious master narratives were integrated into national ones almost anywhere in the course of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
2. The symbiosis between national and religious master narratives was most uncontested in countries with a strong dominant religion, such as the Scandinavian countries, where Lutheranism ruled supreme and the strong identification of the nation with Protestantism was almost completely uncontested.
3. By contrast, in countries with a prominent denominational split, e.g. Germany, separate denominational national master narratives (in Germany's case, a dominant Protestant and a minority Catholic one) appeared which appealed to the different denominational parts of the population.
4. In many of the predominantly Catholic nations in Europe, Catholic national master narratives were often contested by liberal, and sometimes laicist, national master narratives, which often had strong support from professionalised and institutionalized historiographies, e.g. in Spain, France and Italy
5. Religious master narratives were nowhere very successful in challenging national master narratives or providing strong counter-narratives to national ones.

With respect to these findings, Guhe's argument that both moderate laicist and Catholic crusading narratives in France shared an admiration for the crusades, resulting in remarkably similar narratives, is very striking because it points to a widespread acceptance among moderate laicists of the Christian traditions as basis for French civilisation. Only the small radical wing of laicism was so strongly anti-Catholic that it framed crusading narratives in an altogether different way. This finding underlines the power and importance of place of traditional religious narratives in nineteenth-

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<sup>7</sup> Ines Guhe, "Images of the Nation and Concepts of Europe\_in French and German History Textbooks, 1871-1914" in this Dossier.

<sup>8</sup> See, more generally, Stefan Berger and Chris Lorenz (eds), *The Contested Nation: Ethnicity, Class, Religion and Gender in National Histories* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> Matthias Schwerendt, "The Crusades as a European Master Narrative of National Memory Culture", in this Dossier; see also Anthony Smith, *Chosen Peoples: Sacred Sources of National Identity* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 2003).

century national master narratives in France, and, I would argue, beyond. Of course, from a denominational point of view the Middle Ages were deeply problematical, because, at least in the West, they were connected to a Roman, a Catholic idea of Europe associated with the papacy. Hence, for example, we find in deeply Protestant countries, such as the Netherlands, only limited attempts, especially by minority Dutch Catholics, to appropriate the Middle Ages for their own purposes, whereas in mainstream Protestant historiography, the Middle Ages were an embarrassment and Dutch history 'proper' only began with the Reformation, which, luckily and, for Dutch Protestant historiography, not coincidentally, fell together with the high point of the golden age in Dutch 17<sup>th</sup> century national history. By contrast, the Middle Ages were characterized by idolatry, corruption and empty ritual. Groen van Prinsterer, the main representative of this kind of radical Protestant historiography, was keen to write the Middle Ages out of Dutch national history.<sup>10</sup>

One would expect such sentiments to influence crusading narratives in Protestant countries and put them ad odds with Catholic ones just as much as the difference between radical laicist and Catholic narratives in Catholic countries, like France. There are hints in Matthias Schwerendt's discussion of Hans Prutz that there existed a strong anti-Catholic Protestant and Prussian historiographical tradition that linked the history of the crusades to the promotion of anti-Catholicism. However, overall it would seem that we need to explore this relationship between Protestantism and potential counter-narratives to the dominant Catholic crusading narratives more than has been done hitherto. The prominent Sybel-Ficker debate on the role of the Holy Roman Empire on the formation of a German nation state certainly indicates the importance of interpretations of medieval for national history in the German lands and the German empire after 1871.<sup>11</sup> And should we not also perhaps turn our attention to the third important Christian denomination in Europe – Orthodoxy and its positioning towards various crusading narratives? It might be worthwhile in this respect to reflect a little bit more on Byzantium. For many national histories in Eastern Europe, e.g. Greece, Romania, and Russia, the history of Byzantium and Constantinople were crucial in linking the ancient glories to nineteenth-century national movements.<sup>12</sup> Given the important role of the crusades in the eventual downfall of Byzantium and Constantinople, what perspectives on the crusades emerged in those national historiographies and where do they fit into a European narrative on the crusades?

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<sup>10</sup> Peter Raedts, "A Serious Case of Amnesia: the Dutch and their Middle Ages", in: Evans and Marchal (eds), *Uses of the Middle Ages*, 75-87.

<sup>11</sup> On the Sybel-Ficker debate, see Thomas Brechenmacher, „Wieviel Gegenwart verträgt historisches Urteilen? Die Kontroverse zwischen Heinrich von Sybel und Julius Ficker über die Bewertung der Kaiserpolitik des Mittelalters (1859-1862)“, in: *Historisierung und gesellschaftlicher Wandel in Deutschland im 19. Jahrhundert*, Ulrich Muhlack, ed. (Berlin: Akad.-Verl, 2003), 87-111.

<sup>12</sup> Effi Gazi, "Theorizing and Practizing 'Scientific' History in Southeastern Europe (Nineteenth Century): Spyridon Lambros and Nicolae Jorga", in: *Nationalizing the Past: Historians as Nation Builders in Europe*, Stefan Berger and Chris Lorenz, eds (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 192-208. On the importance of Constantinople to constructions of Moscow as the next Constantinople and the Russian orthodox church as heir to Byzantium, see also John Meyendorff, *Rome, Constantinople, Moscow: Historical and Theological Studies* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1992), chap. 7-8.

Ines Guhe in her article stresses an overarching theme of crusading narratives being that of 'unity in Christian faith', but do the analyses presented here not point to the fictitious character of such unity? After all, the strong nationalisation of crusading narratives, the sceptical and perhaps even negative perception of those narratives in Protestant and Orthodox histories, and the distancing from crusading narratives in the laicistic historical narratives of a professionalizing nineteenth-century historiography – all of these factors seem to indicate first, that crusading narratives could serve many different political agendas, and secondly, that this was perhaps precisely why it made them so powerful and omnipresent. In other words, it was the lack of unity which made crusading histories so prominent.

### **Romanticism and Inflections of Crusading Narratives**

The fine articles by Guhe and Schwerendt put the renaissance of crusading histories in their national, European and imperial contexts, but what about the context of the European-wide movement of Romanticism? Or perhaps it would be better to insist with Miklas Teich and Roy Porter that there were in fact many different, nationally inflected, Romanticisms in diverse parts of Europe<sup>13</sup> and ask to what extent the renaissance of crusading histories in the nineteenth century have to be seen also in the context of those Romanticisms? After all, the rediscovery and glorification of the Middle Ages played a vital role in many European Romanticisms. This was a major change from the Enlightenment which tended to connect the Middle Ages with everything that was wrong about Europe. Walter Scott and his influence is mentioned in Ines Guhe's contribution, and from here one could indeed ask to what extent Romantic literature in many different national contexts was of vital importance for the reception of the crusades. And as Romanticism was famously versatile when it came to politics and incorporated everything from left-wing Jacobinism to right-wing monarchism and absolutism, one would expect the history of the crusades once again serving many different masters.

Romantics were keen collectors: not just of fairy and folk tales, but also of medieval manuscripts, and in many cases it was these manuscripts which became so important for all authoritative historical accounts about the Middle Ages in the nineteenth century. Many of the Romantics might have been what we would now refer to as antiquarians rather than professional historians, but their activities in digging up manuscripts and other primary sources and ensuring their survival as well as editing and translating them laid the foundations on which nineteenth century historical scholarship could build. The famous *Monumenta Germaniae Historica* (MGH) in Germany, adopted and adapted in virtually every European nation state, was a product of the Romantic imagination about the Middle Ages. It became professionalized much later and was only to set standards in medieval manuscript editions after the 1870s, when Theodor Mommsen took charge of the MGH, but it was nevertheless rooted in the Romantics' rediscovery

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<sup>13</sup> Roy Porter and Mikuláš Teich (eds), *Romanticism in National Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1988).

of the Middle Ages.<sup>14</sup> In a similar vein, the nineteenth century witnessed veritable manuscript wars of medieval sources, e.g. in Ireland over the question of the origins of the Irish or in Iceland over the meaning of the sagas for Icelandic national identity.<sup>15</sup> In this context one could also ask about the role of the crusades not just in national and transnational narratives, but also about their presence in the primary source material on which these narratives were based. What did the manuscripts that were edited, first by antiquarians and later by professional historians, say about the crusades? How were myths, legends and histories interconnected in those medieval manuscripts? How did historical forgeries impact on the perception of the crusades in various parts of Europe, ranging from the Czech republic to Scotland?<sup>16</sup> All of these questions will be intimately connected to a more in-depth exploration of the role of Romanticisms in the forging of crusading narratives in Europe.

### **The Gendering of the Crusades as a Constituent Aspect in the Gendering of National Narratives**

National histories are heavily gendered. They tend to be male narratives which seek to confirm the exclusion of women from the public sphere. Having said this, women are by no means entirely absent from national master narratives. As the nation is invariably imagined as a family, women are frequently depicted as important in the private sphere. Yet, given the frequent orientation of national histories towards the development of the state and political events, heroines often transgress this distinction between public and private. Boadicea in Britain, Joan of Arc in France, and Luise of Prussia (who can, in fact, be seen as a model for women in the private sphere, transgressing from this only in her meeting with Napoleon in Tilsit) are just some examples of women who play an important role in national histories precisely because they could be found in roles usually reserved for men. The nation was a male affair, and if women wanted to play an active role in the affairs of the nation, they needed to take over male attributes. Very rarely does one encounter cases of self-feminization in national histories. In fact, the only case might well be not a nation, but an empire – the historians of the Habsburg Empire could occasionally write its history in terms which would give to the empire soft, female attributes that were positively connotated in contradistinction to the male, aggressive and nasty northern rival, i.e. Prussia. It was a case of the good mother of the empire, Maria Theresia against the cunning and aggressive father of Prussia, Frederick II. The male historian's imagination certainly was not free of the occasional slant of misogyny. Thus, for example, Johannes Lelewel argued in his history of Poland that most of

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<sup>14</sup> On the history of the MGH, see Horst Fuhrmann, *'Sind eben alles Menschen gewesen': Gelehrtenleben im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Beck, 1996).

<sup>15</sup> Bernadette Cunningham, "Transmission and Translation of Medieval Irish Sources in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries", and Guðmundur Hálfðanarson, "Interpreting the Nordic Past: Icelandic Medieval Manuscripts and the Construction of a Modern Nation", both in Evans and Marchal (eds), *Uses of the Middle Ages*, 7-17 and 52-72.

<sup>16</sup> Fiona Stafford, *The Sublime Savage: a Study of James Macpherson and the Poems of Ossian* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh Univ. Press, 1988); Ian Haywood, *The Making of History: a Study of the Literary Forgeries of James Macpherson and Thomas Chatterton in Relation to 18<sup>th</sup> Century Ideas of History and Fiction* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson Univ. Press, 1986).

the misfortunes of the Polish nation were the result of the influence of the foreign-born wives of the Polish kings. With the professionalization of historical writing throughout the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century, women were marginalized, as they were usually not admitted to the all-male guild of historical master craftsmen, yet female historians continued to write a wide range of histories, even if it is true to say that they, with some famous exceptions, often chose other genres than national history.<sup>17</sup> Whilst women historians have received considerable attention within the history of historiography more recently, the gendering of historical narratives remains a highly underexplored topic. In this respect it is interesting to note that the contributions by Ines Guhe and Matthias Schwerendt allude to the fact that images of the nation and of Europe, as told through the history of the crusades, were heavily gendered. Many Christian virtues were explicitly manly virtues and connected to virility, strength, leadership, calmness and rationality. Virtually all of the heroes of the crusading narratives were knights and there was very little room in those stories for women. But overall, it remains an open question whether women were altogether excluded from crusading narratives and to what extent the narratives themselves were indeed gendered. One can only hope that current scholarship on the crusades will be able to shed more light on these issues.

### **Crusading Narratives and Imperialism**

Many European national narratives were linked intensely to imperial expansion during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and crusading narratives were of great interest to the promoters of imperial-national identities. Thus, for example, Napoleon's expedition to Egypt was accompanied by a renaissance of interest in the history of the crusades. Louis Philippe's imperialist ventures were similarly draped in crusading costumes, when he, between 1838 and 1842, commissioned a series of crusading scenes which were to be displayed at the Versailles palace. The colonialist gaze of the Europeans was invariably linked to an Orientalising perspective just as the ideas of a civilising mission was a common trope of European imperialism. As this *mission civilisatrice* was also often a christianising mission, with the missionary movement expanding together with European colonialism, the histories of the crusades once again could be usefully mobilised for the purposes of empire.

However, as critics of Edward Said's concept of 'Orientalism' have pointed out, many colonisers and colonised engaged in a two-way process of intellectual transfer, with many European colonialists coming to admire the Orient and the civilizations that had developed in the Orient.<sup>18</sup> Ines Guhe

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<sup>17</sup> For an introduction to the theme of the gendering of national histories, see Bonnie Smith, *The Gender of History: Men, Women and Historical Practice* (Cambridge/Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 1998); Angelika Epple, *Empfindsame Geschichtsschreibung. Eine Geschlechtergeschichte der Historiographie zwischen Aufklärung und Historismus* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2003); Mary O'Dowd and Iliaria Porciani (eds), *History Women*, special issue of *Storia della Storiografia* 46 (2004), 79-104; Angelika Epple and Angelika Schaser (eds), *Gendering Historiography. Beyond National Canons* (Frankfurt/M.: Campus-Verlag, 2009).

<sup>18</sup> Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979); John M. MacKenzie, *Orientalism: History, Theory and the Arts* (Manchester: Manchester Univ. Press, 1995); Jür-

and Matthias Schwerendt have given us a number of clues that schoolbooks dealing with the histories of the crusades did not only use the crusades as a means to justify imperial expansion but also to tell stories which allowed for the greater reception of Oriental cultures.<sup>19</sup> In my view it will be worthwhile looking further into the tensions and contradictions of 'Orientalism' within European cultures that are revealed by the reception and portrayal of crusading histories.

This includes not only a more thorough look at European schoolbooks, but also greater attention to the diverse ways in which the crusades have been received outside of Europe and, in particular, in the Orient. The article by Guhe and Schwerendt begins with such a perspective provided by the Muslim writer Rafiq al-Azm, who was directly inspired by the potential of European national histories to inspire sentiments of national solidarity and nationalism. As I have tried to argue elsewhere, national history writing can indeed be seen as one of the most successful export articles of Europe in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>20</sup> Undoubtedly there were various degrees of adaption and adoption of those national master narratives. The situation was very different in areas which had some kind of national history writing of their own, such as China and India, and areas which had no such tradition, such as much of sub-Saharan Africa. There was also the intriguing case of the 'Prussia of the East', i.e. Japan, which adopted national master narratives with a vengeance as part and parcel of modernizing the country and creating its own 'Orient' in Korea and China.<sup>21</sup> Yet, despite many different nuances and forms of reception, there can be no doubt about the overall huge success of 'scientific' national history writing outside of Europe as a direct result of the colonial encounters.

### **The Presentism of Crusading Narratives: History-Writing, Memory, Myths and History Politics**

Another theme that emerges very clearly from Guhe's and Schwerendt's articles and that might be worthwhile reflecting on for a little longer, is the strong presentism that emerges in crusading histories and the uses of the Middle Ages in history politics and national history politics in particular. It is clear, as Matthias Schwerendt points out, that the crusades were a 'symbol for the current political landscape' in different European nation states. It was precisely the 'scientificity' of historical scholarship that made it all the more effective as a political tool. 'Scientificity' was not an obstacle to political partisanship, as the often close relationship between

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gen Osterhammel, "Edward Said und die ‚Orientalismus‘-Debatte: ein Rückblick," *Asien, Afrika, Lateinamerika* 25 (1997), 597-607.

<sup>19</sup> Ines Guhe and Matthias Schwerendt, 'Describing the Enemy. Images of Islam in Narratives of the Crusades' in this Dossier.

<sup>20</sup> Stefan Berger, "Introduction: Towards a Global History of National Historiographies," in: *Writing the Nation: a Global Perspective* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 1-29.

<sup>21</sup> Jie-Hyun Lim, "The Configuration of Orient and Occident in the Global Chain of National Histories: Writing National Histories in North-East Asia", in: *Narrating the Nation: Representations in History, Media and the Arts*, Stefan Berger, Linas Eriksonas and Andrew Mycock, eds (Oxford: Berghahn, 2008), 288-306.

political caesuras and historiographical caesuras demonstrates.<sup>22</sup>

And it is not only the proximity of 'scientific' historical research to history politics that needs to be highlighted. As Chris Lorenz has pointed out elsewhere, any straightforward distinction between myth and history might ignore more complex aspects of the relationship between the two.<sup>23</sup> Lorenz demonstrates that myths and histories fulfil very similar functions when it comes to providing guidance for actions in the present and in particular, when it comes to attempts to construct national identities and solidarities. Drawing on Georg Iggers' and Konrad von Moltke's analysis of Ranke's famous dictum and on an analysis of Wilhelm von Humboldt's theoretical writings on history, Lorenz holds that religious myths are inscribed into the very beginnings of German 'scientific' writing on history.<sup>24</sup> Myths are, Lorenz concludes, part and parcel of 'scientific' history writing from its inception. In the articles by Schwerendt and Guhe one also encounters links between 'scientific' history and myths. Thus, for example, we learn that Heinrich von Sybel was seeking to destroy some of the myths about the crusades by employing the 'scientific' historical method. And yet, few would deny that Sybel's Prussianism was itself a teleological construct which mythologized the history of Prussia in the service of a particular history politics. Guhe's contribution is also directly concerned with the way in which school textbooks conveyed particular crusading myths underlining in the process the proximity of histories and mythologies.

History has often been held up as being different from memory precisely because it does not mythologise but, through a critical re-examination of all available sources, arrives at a truthful approximation of 'what actually happened', in Leopold von Ranke's famous phrase. Even before the onset of modern 'scientific' history, when historians had been far less sure about the precise boundary between 'history' and 'mythology', medieval historians also criticised each other for peddling in myths.<sup>25</sup> Under the paradigm of scientificity, most historians were to agree with what the Irish historian T.W. Moody summed up so succinctly: 'good history ... is a matter of facing

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<sup>22</sup> Heiko Feldner, "The New Scientificity in Historical Writing around 1800", in: *Writing History: Theory and Practice*, Stefan Berger, Heiko Feldner and Kevin Passmore, eds (London: Arnold, [2003] 2010), 3-21. This is clearly different from the neohistorists' assumption of an autonomous sphere of scholarship that untouched by politics. For an exchange on this, see Ulrich Muhlack's review of Stefan Berger's, "The Search for Normality: National Identity and Historical Consciousness in Germany since 1800" (Oxford, 1997), *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute London* XXII, no. 2 (2000): 36-43, and Stefan Berger, "Response to Ulrich Muhlack," *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute London* XXIII, no. 1 (2001), 21-33.

<sup>23</sup> Chris Lorenz, "Drawing the Line: 'Scientific' History between Myth-Making and Myth-Breaking", in: *Narrating the Nation: Representations in History, Media and the Arts*, Stefan Berger, Linas Eriksonas and Andrew Mycock, eds (Oxford: Berghahn, 2008), 35- 55. See also Stefan Berger, "On the Role of Myths and History in the Construction of National Identity in Modern Europe," *European History Quarterly* 39, no. 3 (2009): 490-502, on which some of the following ideas are based.

<sup>24</sup> Georg Iggers and Konrad von Moltke (eds), *Leopold von Ranke: the Theory and Practice of History* (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1973).

<sup>25</sup> Peter G. Bietenholz, *Historia and Fabula: Myths and Legends in Historical Thought from Antiquity to the Modern Age* (Leiden: Brill, 1994).

the facts and myth ... is a way of refusing to face [them]'.<sup>26</sup>

And yet, this does not mean that we should necessarily charge historians with having been naïve positivists. After all, many of them were all too aware that they were at best aiming at an approximation of the truth and that it was impossible to avoid a subjective element in their historical writing. Nevertheless, debunking myths became the foremost characteristic of good 'scientific' history. Hence the professionalisation and institutionalisation of the historical sciences during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries witnessed an intense questioning of the various national myths associated with stories of ethnogenesis, the Middle Ages and national heroes.<sup>27</sup> Philology, in the form of source criticism, imploded many certainties of national histories, but at the same time, the new breed of 'scientific' historians were prone to erecting new mythologies. As Maciej Janowski has shown, three important 'scientific' national historians of Poland, the Czech lands and Hungary, Michał Bobrzyński, Josef Pekař and Gyula Szekfű, self-consciously destroyed the myths of their Romantic predecessors, but they at the same time found it almost impossible to construct mythologies of their own.<sup>28</sup>

Overall then, the examination of crusading histories might well re-affirm a more complex relationship between myths and 'scientific' history: a self-consciously professional history writing contributed not only to the debunking of myths but equally to the construction of myths which came to underpin assumptions of national character and national identity. Commentators on Irish history have long pointed to the potency of myths in historical culture, including historical writing.<sup>29</sup> But Ireland was by no means exceptional. As Guy P. Marchal's penetrating analysis of the interplay between historical consciousness and myths in Switzerland shows, the public uses of history relied on mythologisation.<sup>30</sup>

The blurred borders between histories and myths have already been highlighted by the writings of Hayden White and Michel de Certeau, who have shown how closely intertwined historiography was with rhetorical and lit-

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<sup>26</sup> Cited from Ciarán Brady, "'Constructive and Instrumental': The Dilemma of Ireland's First 'New Historians'", in: *Interpreting Irish History: The Debate on Historical Revisionism, 1938-1994*, Ciarán Brady, ed. (Dublin: Irish Acad. Press, 1994), 7f.

<sup>27</sup> On the professionalization and institutionalisation of historical writing in Europe see *Writing History in Europe: An Atlas of National Institutions*, Ilaria Porciani and Lutz Raphael, eds (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), and *Setting the Standards: Institutions, Communities and Networks of National Historiography*, Ilaria Porciani and Jo Tollebeek, eds (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, forthcoming).

<sup>28</sup> Maciej Janowski, "Three Historians", *Central European University History Department Yearbook* 1 (2001/02), 199-232.

<sup>29</sup> Joep Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination: Patterns in the Historical Representation of Ireland in the Nineteenth Century* (Notre Dame: Univ. of Notre Dame Press, 1997); also Roy Foster, *The Irish Story: Telling Tales and Making it Up in Ireland* (Oxford: Allen Lane, The Penguin Press, 2002), and Alvin Jackson, "Unionists Myths, 1912-1985," *Past and Present* 136 (1992), 164-185.

<sup>30</sup> Guy P. Marchal, *Schweizer Gebrauchsgeschichte. Geschichtsbilder, Mythenbildung und nationale Identität* (Basel: Schwabe, 2006); see also Oliver Zimmer, *A Contested Nation: History, Memory and Nationalism in Switzerland, 1761-1891* (Cambridge: Cambridge Univ. Press, 2003).

erary strategies.<sup>31</sup> And one can go even further back: the juxtaposition between history as 'science' and myths as fictitious and false was one already doubted by the Romantics in the early nineteenth century. They argued that myths were capable of expressing the inner truth about peoples and nations. Therefore they were able to access deeper levels of meaning than mere history and were in some respects more truthful and revealing than the study of the past.<sup>32</sup>

But the Romantics' rehabilitation of myths on the one hand retained the dichotomy of 'history' vs. 'mythology' and, on the other hand, Romanticism in Germany had very little influence on a historiography that professionalized itself earlier than other historiographies in Europe.<sup>33</sup> During the last third of the nineteenth century, historians throughout much of the rest of Europe hailed German historiography as the benchmark of international 'scientificity'. And most of the venerated German historians had drawn a firm line between history and myth, e.g. Johann Gustav Droysen in his famous *Historik*.<sup>34</sup> Myths became increasingly associated with memory, whereas truthfulness was the sign of history.

And yet, any closer look at collective memory will reveal the spuriousness of any such distinction. Collectives cannot remember anything, of course, but individuals construct versions of collective memory through a highly volatile mixture of public and private narratives of which histories are but one part. Yet history writing, through its claims to 'scientificity', has argued that it should be awarded greater credibility and a higher status than other forms of narrative. Scientificity, in other words, was in part a strategy to claim greater authority on behalf of the professional historians. If, therefore, mythologies and histories cannot be neatly delineated, it looks as though, in crusading histories as elsewhere in historical narratives, we will have to be satisfied with the close interrelationship between history, collective memory and myth.

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<sup>31</sup> Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Univ. Press, 1973); Michel de Certeau, *The Writing of History* (Columbia: Columbia Univ. Press, 1988).

<sup>32</sup> Peter Burke, "History, Myth and Fiction, 1400-1800", in: *Oxford History of Historiography*, vol. 3, José Rabasa, Masayuki Sato and Edoardo Tortarolo, eds (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press 2012, forthcoming).

<sup>33</sup> Ernst Schulin, „Der Einfluss der Romantik auf die deutsche Geschichtsforschung,“ in: *Traditionskritik und Rekonstruktionsversuch. Studien zur Entwicklung von Geschichtswissenschaft und historischem Denken*, Ernst Schulin, ed. (Goettingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979), 24-43.

<sup>34</sup> Wilfried Nippel, *Johann Gustav Droysen. Ein Leben zwischen Wissenschaft und Politik* (Munich: Beck, 2008), 219-238.